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## EDITORIALS.

EDITORS, E. D. COPE AND J. S. KINGSLEY.

—It is to be hoped that the alleged intention of the Postmaster-General to unify the system of names of post-offices in the United States may be carried into effect. The poverty of inventive capacity of our people in the matter of the giving of names is remarkable. Many places in the Eastern States are named from localities in the Old World, from which the early immigrants came. This is objectionable, but it is tolerable so long as the duplication shall go no farther. Such naming as was practiced by the early inhabitants of the State of New York was less excusable, since no bond of local affection was the motive for ransacking the ancient geographies and dumping their contents broadcast over the wilderness. But now we meet with duplication after duplication springing up in all the States, south and west of the Alleghanies. The settlers and builders of new towns seem to imagine that to give a name which is not already on the map or in a book reflects on their intelligence and knowledge of geography; so that new Manchesters, Birminghams, Troys, Romes, Athensens, Springfields, etc., etc., are springing up with a rapidity that is confusing to the mind and destructive to any correct knowledge of the whereabouts of such places. A little reflection will convince any persons desirous of naming a new town or post-office that one of the most efficient ways of advertising a place is to give it a name unlike any other; and moreover that by so doing much trouble in the matter of future mail delivery will be spared them.

A majority of our naturalists who have naming to do exhibit the same deficiency. They frequently encourage foolish naming of localities by naming species after them. If such local names are changed hereafter the scientific names founded on them will be left high and dry. But the least excusable form of scientific name is that which is taken from a locality whose name is already a duplicate of one in the Old World. Who ever heard of Naples in New York? Yet a paleontologist has recently named an important fossil *Clymenia neapolitana*, which is found in the "Naples shale," in Western New York. Another has with equal absurdity named a species from Minnesota *Camarella bernensis*. A geologist names a glacial beach the Leipsic

beach. There should, of course, be no such names as Naples, Berne or Leipsic in America; but as they are there, it is a conspicuous gauche-rie that scientists should seek to preserve them in nomenclature. Science is cosmopolitan, and the law of priority should apply to local names as well as to anything else. It is to be hoped that the time will come when a rule will be added to those in our code, that no name shall be given from a locality whose name had a previous existence in some other part of the world.

—WE have received a circular from a distinguished member of National Academy of Sciences which suggests that the number of members of the Academy be reduced to seventy. The number of one hundred does not seem to be excessive if we consider the probable future of our country, but an increase in the number is clearly inadvisable. The proposed reduction seems to us equally so. The change most needed is one which shall designate classes of members and thus keep deficiencies more clearly before the Academy. Four classes were proposed several years ago, with the following proportions: Of the 100, 35 to represent inorganic science (Sec. A); 35 to represent organic science (Sec. B); 15 to represent mental and mathematical science (Sec. C); and 15 to represent applied science (Sec. D).